

Beacon Writing

Book Three
Hooper • Fairbank

BEACON WRITING

Of the various systems of handwriting now taught in schools, that which holds the greatest promise is the italic, and this is being widely recognised as its use extends. Italic handwriting is a traditional system which has been modernised and adapted so that in its simplest form it is easier to teach and write than print-script ('ball and stick'). Also it readily develops into a fine and fluent script when pen and ink are used and it goes on progressing in speed and grace as the child grows up. Italic handwriting is not so likely to decay under pressure of speed as other systems, and is very legible.

The Beacon Writing Books, which have been produced by the co-operation of authors who have experience in the teaching of infants, juniors and adults, with myself as calligrapher and editor, offer a solution to the problem of teaching children to write, for they are intended to be both a means of helping the child to teach himself and of assisting the teacher to teach.

Alfred Fairbank

BEACON WRITING
BOOK THREE

MRS. ZACH LAMAR FELDER
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SCALAE LAE PROVISOSUBITVSQVE APPARVITIGNIS
 DISCURRUNT ALII AD PORTAS PRIMOSQVE ITRUCIDANT
 FERRVM ALII TORQUENT ET OBVMBRA TAETTERATELLIS
 IPSE INTER PRIMOS DEXTERA SUB MOENIA TENDIT
 AENEAS MAGNAQVE INCUSAT VOCE LATINVM
 TESTATURQVE DEOS ITERVM SE AD PROELLACOGI
 BIS IAM ITA OSTHOSTISTAE CAETERA TOEDERARVM
 EXORITVR TREPIDOS INTER DISCORDIA CIVES
 VRBE ALII RESARARE IVBENT ET LANDERE PORTAS
 DADANI DISIPSVMOQVE TRATVNT IN MOENIA REGEM
 ARAMITAE VNIAITPERGUNT DEFENDERE MVROS
 INCUSASVITCVMLATEBROS OINIVMICE PASTOR
 VESTIGAVIT APES ITVMQVE IMPIEVIT AMARO
 ILLAE INTVSTREPIDAE RERVMPERACERE AC ASTRA
 DISCURRUNT MAGNISQVE ACVNT STRIDORIBVS IRAS
 VOIVITVR ATERO DORTICTISTVM ALIVM VIRE CAECO
 INTVSSAXASONANTVACVASITVMVSADAVRAS
 ACCIDIT HAECESSIS ETIAM FORTVNA LATINIS
 QVAE TOTAM VICTV CONCVSSIT FVNDITVS VRBE
 REGNAVIT ICTIS VENIENTE IMPROSTICIT HOSTE
 INCESSIMVROSIGNES ADINTECTA VOLARE
 NVS QVAAMACIES CONTRA RVTVLAS NVLLA AGMINATVR
 INFELIX PVGNAE IVVNIM INCERTAM INACERDIT

A page from Virgil

You are looking at an example of Roman writing that must be 1,500 years old.
 The scribe has copied a passage from the poet Virgil who lived from 70 to 19 B.C.
 As you see, only capital letters are used, and there are no spaces between words.

BEACON WRITING

A COURSE IN ITALIC

CALLIGRAPHY BY ALFRED FAIRBANK

BOOK THREE

WINIFRED HOOPER

GINN AND COMPANY LTD

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FOREWORD

Books Three and Four in the *Beacon Writing Series* are intended for beginners in the use of the italic cursive hand; beginners of any age who feel the need for a carefully analysed form of instruction, but particularly in its approach and language for the Junior child of from seven to ten years. For the Junior child the teaching of a cursive hand might correspond with the first use of the pen and the study of handwriting as a craft. Its transition into other exercises requiring written expression will occur quite naturally as the new form develops.

Handwriting has held an undeservedly insignificant place in the curriculum. As both a vehicle of thought and an artistic craft it forges a strong link between one subject and another, between expert and beginner, between artist and connoisseur. The ability to produce a good hand is within the reach of all; there are no intellectual barriers, neither is an advantage in years an asset, so that here in this one subject teacher and child can work together on equal terms with mutual understanding and sympathy and excitement. Here, the discouraged child may discover a new power and a growing confidence in his own ability.

The exactness of achievement that is required in these first lessons demands a self-imposed discipline of accurate listening, accurate seeing, and accurate performance, that is, in itself, a basic training of immeasurable value. No other subject

reveals our inadequacies in this respect so plainly; success, however limited, is a satisfying and exhilarating reward. The progress that is demonstrated so clearly in the craft of handwriting becomes apparent at the same time in other subjects. The same fundamentals are needed, good habits and the power to criticize usefully one's own performance.

There are indeed no margins nor limits to the interests that emerge from a deeper study of our subject. With our pupils we look at original examples and facsimiles of the work of our forebears, and want to know more about their materials and tools, or we look abroad at the work of artists and craftsmen of other countries and civilizations and want to know something of their background and thought. We measure and assess what we see with a growing discernment and know that reason and knowledge add something to the value of our judgements.

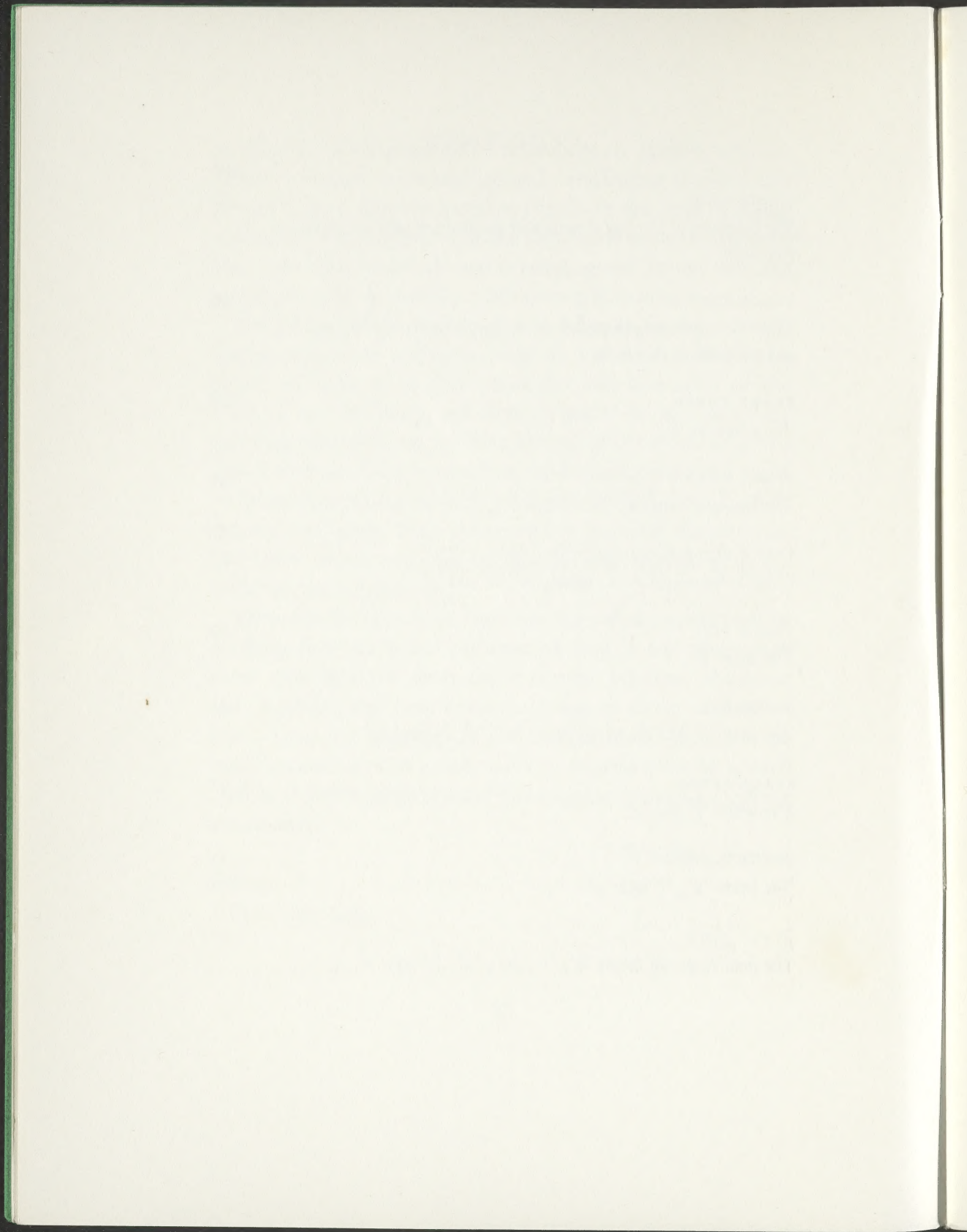
These books have been the outcome of an experiment in teaching that has borne unexpected fruit. I feel that much more was achieved than the threefold purpose, rhythmic ease, legibility and pace in handwriting. A direct method of instruction was used and is used in this book, there are no modifications in the words used to express processes, each craft has its own language and this becomes part of a working vocabulary.

Winifred Hooper

Ealing,
Summer 1959

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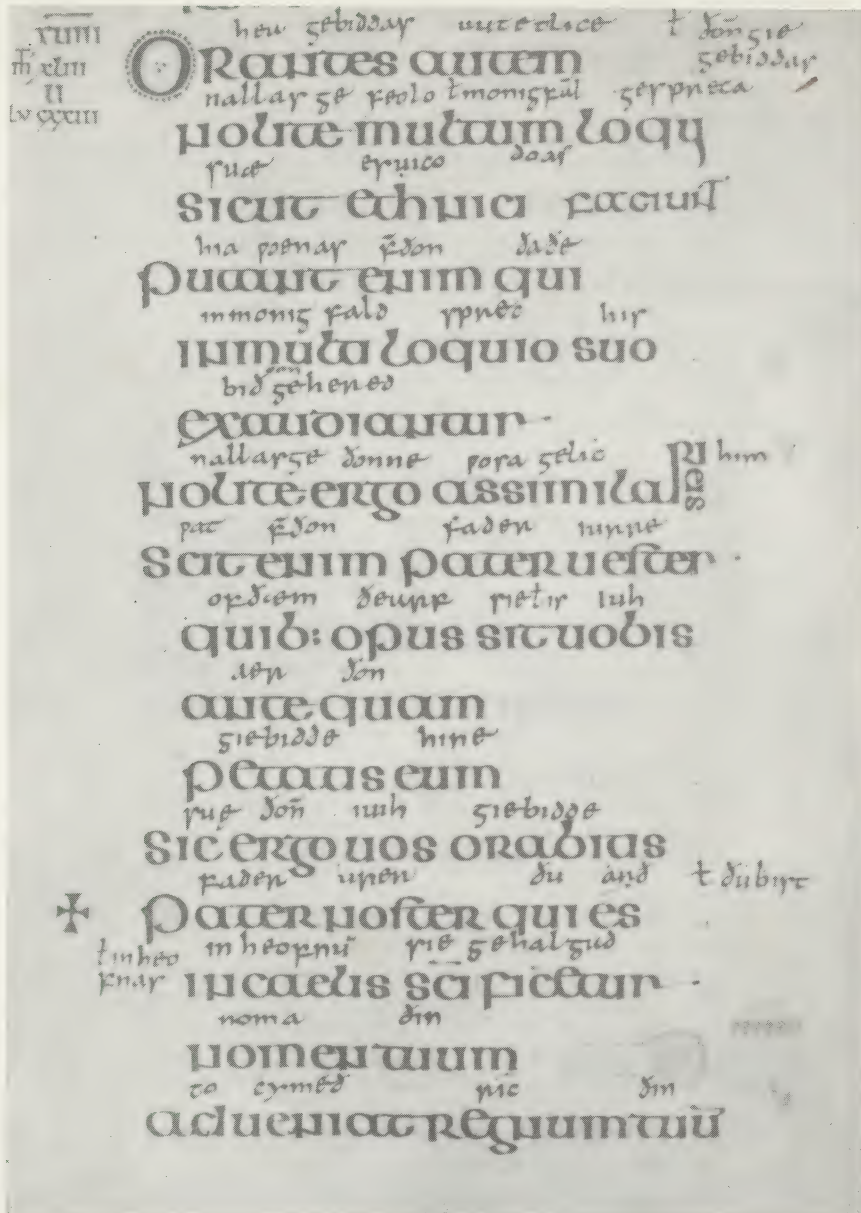
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT is made to the owners of copyright photographs used in this book as follows: Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 52626, Page from Virgil written in Roman (rustic) capitals. Perhaps of the 4th-5th century. Vatican Library (*frontispiece*), No. 49798, The Golden Gospel, 11th century (p. 18) MS. 21345 from Worcester Cathedral, 14th century (p. 26), MS. No. 37410 from India, A.D. 1590 (p. 30), MS.E.810, Page from Petrarch (p. 61); British Museum Cotton MS Nevo D.iv. Lindisfarne Gospels, written by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne in insular half-uncials, c. A.D. 700 (p. 10) MS. 17341, Gospel Lectionary of Paris, late thirteenth century (p. 24); Roy 14.C. III Eusebius, Scribe: Bartolomeo San Vito (p. 40).

The lines from 'London Snow' on p. 51 are from *The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges*, published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

The author's thanks are due to Mr. Alfred Fairbank for the beautiful examples of lettering that occur throughout the book.



Lindisfarne Gospels

This is from one of the finest books ever made. It was written in the North of England and is now one of the treasures of the British Museum. Would you have guessed it was over 1,200 years old?

STAGE ONE

This is a book about handwriting, about good handwriting, or if you would like to use another word, about calligraphy. When you are able to write a good hand, and to know why it is a good hand, then you can say: Well, now I am a calligrapher.

Perhaps you know another word which means almost the same thing as calligrapher. It is the word 'scribe'. You may remember reading of scribes in the Bible, or perhaps you have seen pictures of old manuscripts, some of them hundreds of years old, the work of scribes. We could talk for a long time about scribes and their wonderful work, but let us not do so today, because we want to get on with our own calligraphy, and when we can do a little, we shall enjoy, so much more, the work of the great scribes of our own and other countries.

We want to begin to learn some of the things that can make handwriting attractive, so attractive that we can look at it again and again. Have you ever felt like that about anything you have seen? Have you ever felt that you wanted to look again and then again at some beautiful thing? Have you noticed that each time you look at it, it seems to become more lovely, to grow in loveliness? I think that a picture by a great artist is like that. If you have ever seen one, you will know

what I mean. One of our great poets, John Keats, believed this, and wrote about it like the great artist he was. This is what he wrote:

*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us; and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health and quiet breathing.*

Do you like those lines? I never tire of them. I think you can enjoy them, even if you do not quite understand them. Their meaning or significance grows. But we, too, are to make a 'thing of beauty', as we become good calligraphers.

I used to think that if I tried hard enough, I would become a fine writer, and I did try very hard, but did not produce anything that was beautiful. I did not know enough to become a fine calligrapher. I did not know the rules; and the curls and flourishes, I sometimes added, looked odd and fussy, and did not go well with the other letters. We are often like that when we learn to play the piano or violin. We want to do the grand, exciting things straight away, but find we must stick to some very simple exercises. The young dancer who hopes to become a ballerina, the cricketer who dreams of becoming a Test player, both find that they must learn the rules and movements first. The more anxious they are to become experts, the more careful they must be to begin well,
X however easy and monotonous that beginning may seem.

STAGE ONE

*True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.*

So handwriting needs care and patience and perseverance much more than pen and paper; and you will soon discover how important a pair of eyes can be, eyes that have been trained to see.

Are you wondering when we are going to begin? Well, let us begin now. I believe you will say: Isn't this easy? It isn't very difficult, but because it is the beginning, it is the most important stage of all.

You have a special pen that can be used to make up-hill strokes like this:

////////

very delicate and very thin, and down-hill strokes like this:

\\\\\\\\

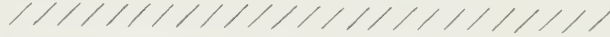
stronger and thicker. The fine up-hill strokes are used more frequently and are called 'hair-lines'. Can you guess why?

If you find it easy to make the up-strokes thin, and the down-strokes thick, you are probably holding your pen comfortably and correctly. Would you like to try some hair-lines? Don't forget that they slope very steeply:

////////

Suppose you thought of them as hill-slopes. Well they would be too steep for you to walk up; too steep for you to cycle up; in fact, too steep for both the pedestrian and the cyclist; and even, too steep for the motorist. Try one line in

your book, very lightly. Remember they are hair-lines ascending:



Have you finished? Did your hair-lines slope steeply, and were they really HAIR-lines? If they are done well, they always remind me of a fine shower of April rain, because they all slope the same way, as if swept by a gentle wind. That is one of the things that makes good handwriting so beautiful, and that makes rain beautiful and fascinating to watch. The slightest breeze will catch its gossamer fineness, but whatever its drift, the delicate, transparent shafts will continue to follow a common direction. They are all parallel, one to another. Will you look about you and see if there are any other lines in the room that are parallel to each other?

Did you find those hair-lines easy? If you did, your pen is sloping from the paper towards your right elbow. Now if you can, keep your pen in the same position, and then come down-hill on the other side, like this:

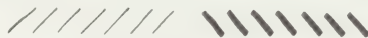
up ^ down

up ^ down

you will notice that the steep down-hill stroke is a thicker stroke. Let us try some of these thicker down-hill strokes:



What a different feeling it gives. We skimmed over the paper so lightly going up, but coming down the pen dragged a little, as though a brake was on. Let us try a few of each:



STAGE ONE

The down-strokes are not very much like fine April rain, but more like a heavy downpour, those strong, slanting, grey spears of rain we get in a thunderstorm, when we sometimes say: It is just teeming down!

Let us draw some more, all sloping the same way, all parallel to each other. Shall we try to make them the same size, too? You will remember that they are very steep, too steep for a pedestrian, dangerously steep for a cyclist, even for a tobogganer:



They look more attractive if we keep these three rules.

1. All sloping the same way, that is, parallel to each other.
2. All the same size.
3. All spaces equal.

Can you do that? Try.

We can begin to enjoy these strokes now. Let us mix them, in interesting groups, up-hill hair-lines and down-hill strokes. We can arrange them as we like in small numbers, carefully following the first rules of calligraphy:



Now let us give ourselves a serious test. There are three things to do:

1. A line showing a series of hair-lines.
2. A line showing down-hill strokes.
3. A line showing both.

Have you done that? Well, let us suppose that you are the teacher. You are going to mark those three lines to discover the best calligrapher. You want to be very fair, and so you must have some rules to help you. These rules will help you to judge quite fairly, when you mark your own work:

1. Give 5 marks for the size. 5
If the strokes are all of equal height you get 5 out of 5.
2. Give 5 marks for the hair-lines. 5
Are they all thin, resembling hairs?
3. Give 5 marks for the slope of the hair-lines. 5
Are they really steep?
Are they parallel?
4. Give 5 marks for the downward strokes. 5
Are they steep too?
Parallel?
5. Give 5 marks for the three lines together. 5
Does the whole passage look good, and well-
arranged?

25

STAGE ONE

That makes a maximum of 25 marks. How many marks have you scored? You would be quite remarkable if you could score 25; you would be very good indeed, if you could score 16 the first time.

Here are the tests of two girls aged eight to nine years. What marks would you give them?



ensum. ut intellexerent scripturas. & dixit eis. Qm̄ sic scriptū
est. & sic oportebat xp̄m pati. et surgere a mortuis die tertia.
& predicari in nomine ei paenitentiam. & remissionē peccatorū
in omnes gentes. Incipientibus ab hierosolima. uos autē sedete in ci-
uitate quoad usq. induamini uirtute ex alto. & duxit autē eos foras
in bethaniam. et eleuatis manibus suis benedixit eis. Et factū ē
dum benediceret illis recessit ab eis. et ferebatur in caelum. Et ipsi
ad adorandū regressi sunt in hierusalem cum gaudio magno. Et erant
semper in templo laudantes. et benedicentes dñm. Amen.
EXPLICIT EUANGELIUM SECUNDUM LUCAM

INCIPIUNT CAPITULA SECUNDUM IOHANNEM

Pharisaei et iudei uenientes interrogant iohannē. iohannes si uis uidentis agnū dicit
et ante os p̄ se dicit inuenimus messiam.

In sadace nūda equa unū fecit. de templo nūmularios eiecit solute hoc tēplū dicens
nichodemo loquitur de baptismo. & de alius multis.

In sadace baptizat & iohannes in enon. quod dicit xp̄m crescere se autē minorari.

In cum muliere samaritana loquitur. propheta in patria sua sine honore ē dicit. & reguli
filium a morte resuscitat.

A pud natatoria bethsaida triginta octo annorum infirmitatē hominis sanata ē dicit & ritum
¶ Vos autem estis testes horum et ego mittam promissum patris mei in uos.

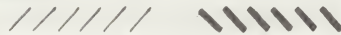
The Golden Gospel

This manuscript was written 900 years ago, in the eleventh century. You will still not be able to read it because it is in Latin, the language of the Romans. Small letters are appearing but the words are not spaced as we space them today.

STAGE TWO

Did you manage to practise any more hair-lines? If you did, we are ready to study some letter-shapes. We are quite ready, because we know something about slope, and because we know how to hold the pen. Once we have discovered that right position, we do not change it. The same pen position will give us both the finest hair-line, and the heaviest slanting down-stroke.

Shall we practise a few, in order to be quite sure that we can do these strokes, without pressing on the pen to make the down-strokes thicker:



The slanting or diagonal down-stroke is much harder, but it is not used very often. The delicate hair-line is used in almost every letter-form. Do you know why some strokes are thicker than others although we are not using any pressure? Study the tip of your nib, and you will probably see the reason. It is a special nib, shaped rather like the fine quills some of the famous scribes used five hundred years ago. A pointed nib would not give you this variation in thickness, and this variation, light and dark strokes flashing over the page, is the sunshine and shadow of calligraphy. Can you imagine how flat and dull the world would be without these two contrasting things? Here is the glorious,

radiant, life-giving sun; and there, beneath the trees, the cool, tranquil, patterned shade.

Today, we are going to practise a new stroke, one that we shall use continually – another down-stroke. I believe it is used in every letter except eight; that is, in eighteen letters of the alphabet. It is not as light as the hair-line nor as heavy as the strong, diagonal down-stroke. It is almost vertical, but not quite. It is a lovely running stroke.

This new down-stroke leans slightly forward like a runner – or like a skater gliding along. Of course, a skater would never lean backward or his heels would go up. He leans slightly forward, and then he is nicely balanced like this:

//////// ////////////// ////////////// //////////////

So now we have three strokes we can use, and with those we can proceed with our alphabet. Here they are:

1. UP ////////// the delicate hair-line.
2. DOWN \\\\\\\\\\\\ the strong, diagonal down-stroke.
3. DOWN ////////// the running down-stroke.

and we must practise Number 3, the one that reminds us of a skater or a runner, a little more:

//////// ////////////// ////////////// //////////////

Do you agree that it is the easiest of all? If you have done it well, you are a promising calligrapher. Watch the slope very carefully – not too much, not too little. Think of the

STAGE TWO

skater; too much, and he will fall on his face; too little, and he is on his back. So study your angle very carefully, and then practise it until you give yourself full marks:

||||| ||||| ||||| |||||

We are going to use this new stroke, Number 3, with our first stroke, Number 1; the running stroke with the hair-line, and with these two strokes we shall make a number of letters. They will be easily recognized as members of the same family, because they are alike.

Let us begin by having an eye test. Our eyes may be perfectly good, but quite untrained, so that we miss all the things, or some of the things, that we should see. Copy this:

lllllll

Have you done it? Let us test our power of seeing. You should be able to answer, Yes, to these three questions:

1. Does the first down-stroke slope very slightly forward like the skater?
2. When you turn into the hair-line at the bottom, do you turn with a very narrow curve, not a point?

l is right

⚡ is wrong

3. Is the hair-line at the end very steep?

Well, did you get all three answers? Be sure to practise this shape until you are certain it will pass every test. Never make the same mistake twice, because you will be practising something that is wrong, and it will soon become a bad habit:

llllllllll

It is very important not to get a round back like this *Ⓢ* for that shape would belong to another letter, so let this young group carry themselves with straight shoulders.

Below are some letters which start correctly, but only one ends correctly. Which is it? Look closely!

l l l l l

Which did you select? I hope it was the second.

Here is another observation test. It will show how much you can observe about three letters. There they are at the bottom of this paragraph. Each of the three letters has been written three times. Study them in turn, and then altogether, and see how many observations you can make about them. I think you should notice ten things. When you have finished, look at the answers and total your score.

iiiitttllll

ANSWERS

1. The down-strokes slope forward and are parallel.
2. The curves at the bottom are narrow.
3. The hair-lines are steep and parallel to each other.
4. The three letters are of different height.
5. The 't' is taller than the 'i'.
6. The 't' is shorter than the 'l'.
7. The 't' has a cross, the 'i' a dot.
8. The cross of the 't' is horizontal.
9. The cross of the 't' is about as high as the 'i'.
10. The dot over the 'i' is about as high as the top of the 't'.

STAGE TWO

That was a very thorough test, and I expect you noticed most of those points. They are all important. If you had to re-arrange the answers and put the most important first, and then continue until the least important came last, I wonder what your arrangement would be.

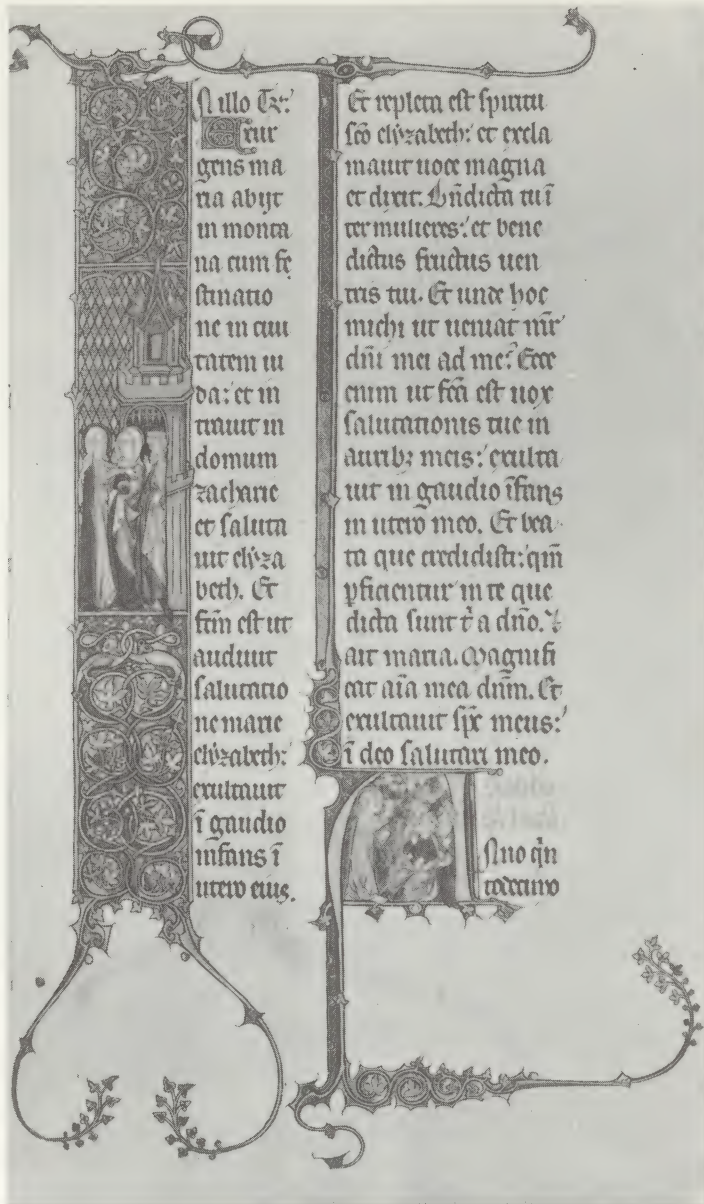
Did you notice the word horizontal in the eighth answer? It is a word you should know because it has a particular meaning of its own, that we often need to express. Can you find out what it means? When you have done so, find some horizontal lines or edges in the classroom and in your books. Find some vertical lines too. Say the two words very carefully, and then you will find you can spell them: hor-i-zon-tal, ver-ti-cal.

Let us perfect these family shapes before we practise the letters:

uu lll lll uu lll lll uu lll lll

When you find the shapes flowing along quite easily, going with a swing or a beat like walking and running, like poetry and music, then you are writing rhythmically. Say, if you like, some lines from Hiawatha as you write, and you will notice that this family of letters has the same steady rhythm:

<i>Then the</i>	<i>little</i>	<i>Hia</i>	<i>-watha</i>
l	l	l	l
<i>Took his</i>	<i>bow and</i>	<i>took his</i>	<i>arrows</i>
l	l	l	l



The work of a scribe of the thirteenth century

You can see this fine example of a scribe's work enriched with beautiful colours in the British Museum. Look closely at the exquisite detail in the capitals. Little did the writer know that this page would be treasured and studied for seven hundred years.

STAGE TWO

Now let us make some attractive groups, but remind yourself first of the ten points in the observation test:

lllll lllll lllll

itti itti itti itti itti itti itti

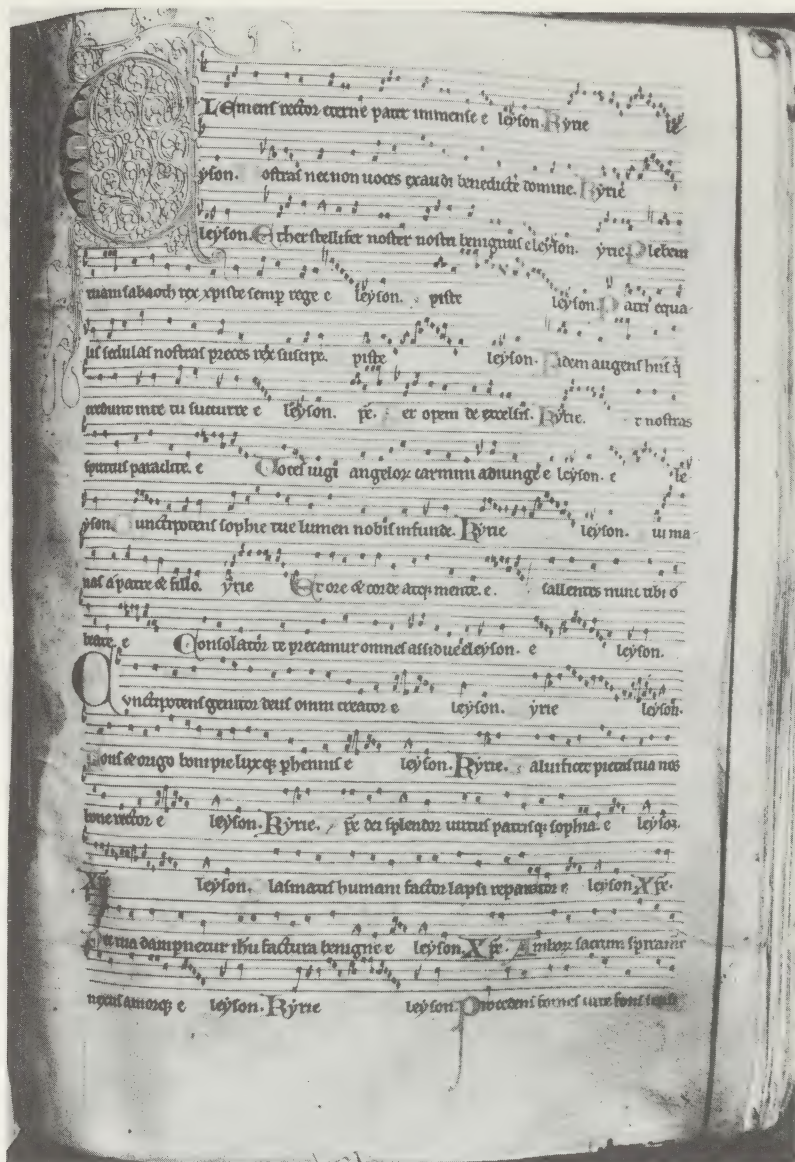
ititititititititi ititititititititi

titititititititititititititititit

Our calligraphy is beginning to look beautiful. Can you see the light and shadow of those flashing strokes? Does it remind you of falling rain, with its return splash in the hair-line.

Try some more patterns and then let us see how many words we can make from these three letters. I can think of five:

it ill tit lit till



A music manuscript from Worcester Cathedral

I think you will be interested in this music manuscript from a service book of Worcester Cathedral, written six hundred years ago. The dazzle of gold leaf, which was used in the illumination of capitals, does not photograph well; its shining surface gives a pale effect.

STAGE THREE

I think the first two stages are the most important and perhaps the most difficult. You will often find that a shape that looks simple is very hard to do, while the one that looks so difficult or complicated, is frequently quite easy. So I must warn you to be quite sure that you are satisfied with the letters, 'i', 't' and 'l', before you leave them. It would be a good idea to try them through once more to see if they pass all the tests. The 'i' first; a slight slope for the down-stroke like the runner's position, and a sharp curve leading into the hair-line.

This is wrong: *ʀ ʀ* and this is wrong: *ll*

This is right: *lll*

Avoid the curved back *l*
feeble and sagging with weariness. It hasn't the spring and energy and the fine straight back of the true letter:

lll

I hope you have remembered where to cross the 't' and how tall the 't' is.

itl itl itl

Is it safe to leave these letters? Try them and see.

Here is a new shape:

o

You may think this is quite, quite simple, but before we start writing, let us examine it, so that we see it as it is. Answering these questions in turn will help us:

1. Is it a circle?
2. Is it upright?
3. Where is the stroke thicker?
4. Where does it start?

I hope you said, No to the first question. It is an ellipse. It has an elliptical shape:

ooo circles

o o o o elliptical shapes or ovals.

The elliptical shape at the top of this page is taller than it is wide, but the circle is just as wide as it is high. Can you see that they are related in this way to squares and oblongs?

I hope you said No to the second question, too. Our letter is not quite upright because it will need to stand with the other families of letters in that forward position. Writing is not stationary, it moves; like the pedestrian, the runner; like the dancer, the skater; and so, like them, it leans slightly forward.

We can answer questions 3 and 4 together. It is slightly thicker at the starting point:

5 /

STAGE THREE

and slightly thicker before it turns at the bottom, on the left:

o o o

If we were looking at a map we would say, thicker at the N.E. and S.W.

Let us see what we can do with this elliptical letter:

ooo ooo ooo

and now all our letters:

otto otto ottottottotto otto otto

oi ot ol ol ot oi ol ol ot oi

lolololo lolololo lolololo

to too tool lo lot loot oil toil

Can you think of any more words that can be made from these four letters? Can you make any other attractive groups?




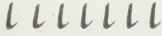
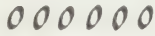


From an Indian manuscript book, A.D. 1590

Here is a very different example of calligraphy. In some eastern countries the handwriting was considered worthy of a place in the picture. This picture was painted by two Court artists and it represents the Emperor Akbar, who ruled in India at the same time as our Queen Elizabeth I reigned here, superintending the making of the Garden of Fidelity at Kabul. Can you find some examples of the calligraphy of scribes of China, Greece, Persia and other countries?

STAGE FOUR

Although you may find this hard to believe, the worst part of our work is over. If you can do:

1. UP  the delicate hair-line
2. DOWN  the strong diagonal line
3. DOWN  the running line
4.  3 and 1 combined
5.  the ellipse

then you will complete all the letters of the alphabet quite quickly. But you must be able to do those fundamental lines and shapes very well indeed, if the twenty-two remaining letters are to be good. Be sure, then, to give yourself a very strict test before you go any further, or you may be disappointed with your results. If you are doing these five exercises satisfactorily, then you know that your pen-hold is good, and that you are beginning a training, a training to write with speed and with a tireless ease.

We are going to start this stage with a shape that is repeated again and again in another family of letters. It is not 3 and 1 combined as in the 'i', but the reverse. It is 1 and 3 combined; a short hair-line, a curve, the running down-stroke:

There is no point at the top; just steep hair-line, narrow curve, and running down-stroke. Practise this pattern beginning with three hair-lines:

'''1''1''1''1''1''1''1''1''1

That is only part of the letter. The second part is much the same, but to do it we must not lift our pen from the paper. So let us begin another, and when we have reached the bottom of the down-stroke, then, immediately, the pen travels up the same stroke, inclining, as it does so, a little to the right, so that when it is about half-way up, we can see that it is gradually branching away. This branching away is very gradual indeed; there is no sudden break as though the stem of a flower had been broken, but just this gradual growing away from the main stem. At the right level, there is a curve, almost like the first curve, and then again, the running down-stroke:

η η η η η η

But still the letter is unfinished. It wants a final hair-line, so that the last two strokes bring us back to our friend the 'i':

“1 ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓

The middle stroke, going up from the bottom, reminds me of a jet of water going up quite straight from its shaft. About halfway up it loses some of its force, and sways a little to the right. Then it curves over, and falls. Have you noticed fireworks doing the same thing? So the ‘n’ family will remind us of two beautiful things, fountains and fireworks:

nnn nnn nnn nnn

STAGE FOUR

This family makes me think of twins. The two curves of the 'n' and the three curves of the 'm' should be related to each other; they should be alike in height, in width, in slope:

nmnm nnnn mmmm

ni ni ni mi mi mi in im in im

This must be the right time to test our reading. Let us discover how well you can remember the things you have read. First, copy the exercise above.

Now look at your 'n's' and 'm's':

1. Is the first stroke in each steep and delicate? [1 mark]
2. Is it topped by a narrow curve, not a point? [1 mark]
3. Are the top curves related to each other? [1 mark]
4. Are the running strokes parallel to each other? [1 mark]
5. Are they the same distance apart? [1 mark]
6. Does each letter end with a sharp curve followed by a steep hair-line? [2 marks]

How did you get on this time? Are you a good reader, able to follow and remember the instructions that you read? Let us combine the 'n' and 'm' with some or all of the other letters we have practised:

nmnm in im on om nmnmnn

no ni nt nl ln tn in on

noon tin lion nil on ton not loon moon loom

nmnmnmnmnm

The 'n' and 'm' always strike me as being very peaceful and calm, keeping all the rules, and just rippling along, gently and evenly. When my writing deteriorates, I do a few 'n's' and 'm's' and then it recovers. I like to do a group, with the end of one letter almost joined to the beginning of the next. You can only do that if your hair-line is very steep.

We now have six letters, enough to build a number of words like

mint, lint, lino, not, toll.

STAGE FOUR *continued*

I have called this chapter 'Stage 4 continued', because I am quite sure you will agree that the following letters are closely related to the 'n' and 'm', and so are in the same family. The first, the letter:

h

should be quite simple to do. Do not forget the slight slope of the first down-stroke like a skater gliding forward; and be very careful of the curve – not too broad; and careful of the second down-stroke – it should be parallel to the first. Here is a short exercise to practise:

hhh hihihh hhh

So many words begin with:

th

that I think we should practise this combination. They look very uncomfortable if they are too close together, like people in a tightly packed queue. Although they are often together, like good companions, they need some breathing space. A careful hair-line at the bottom end of the 't', helps to show how much:

th th th th th

Is the space between the down-stroke of the 't' and the 'h' about the same as the width at the lower part of the 'h'?

Remember, this is wrong: *h*

and this is right: *h*

Are you quite sure that you can make a perfect 'h'? Then you are ready to try the next member of that family:

b

You can see that the 'h' and 'b' are exactly alike until the last stroke, when the 'h' moves to the right with a delicate ascending hair-line, and the 'b' curves in to the left, straightening a little as it meets the first stroke. The last pushing stroke is almost a horizontal line, but notice the word 'almost' and do not produce a flat straight line, like this:

b this is wrong. Too flat.

b this is right. Just balanced.

b this is wrong. Too pointed.

The stroke thickens a little at the end if we are holding the pen correctly:

hb hb hb hb hb hb

When you practise a letter, stop after the first one, to see if it passes all the tests. Try again, if it does not, and stop again, examining the letter carefully to see if it is satisfying.

STAGE FOUR (CONTINUED)

Then, when you can give yourself full marks, try a series of letters and see how well they look.

We now come to a letter which many people find curiously difficult. It ends with a short, firm, horizontal line and that is the difficulty. Do you know how a builder tests a surface to see if it is horizontal. He uses a spirit level. Have you seen one? He can also test his vertical surfaces. Do you know what he uses? It would be interesting to find out.

This letter begins like the 'n'. There is the steep hair-line, the curve, the down-stroke, and then the rocket going up, following the path of the down-stroke for about half its distance, then breaking away a little, just as though it would curve over and descend:

r

But no, it doesn't descend. It travels a very short distance in a horizontal line. It seems as though the rocket started to streak across the sky and then went out:

r r r r

It is a lovely letter finished excellently by that simple, horizontal line, but its simplicity deceives us. We think we see a waving curve, but look again and you will see it is an effect given by the thickening stroke:

~ this is wrong; it is curved.

r this is right; short horizontal end.

Try this exercise:

r r r r

rn rm rn rm rn rm rn rm

rh rl rt tr lr hr br rb rh rt

thr thr thr thr thr thr

Can we think of some words using the letters we have studied?

or orb rob rot root nor tor bob lob mob

noon room moor morn torn horn moth

STAGE FIVE

Stage 5 will be the shortest, for we shall deal with only one letter. You will need to be very observant, for this one is rather difficult to describe. It is made by two strokes both starting from the top, both going in opposite directions.

The beginning or first stroke is this:

CCCCC

It is something like an 'i', but curved a little. The second stroke:

~~~~~

is something like a comma. Here are the two together:

CCCC~ e eeeee

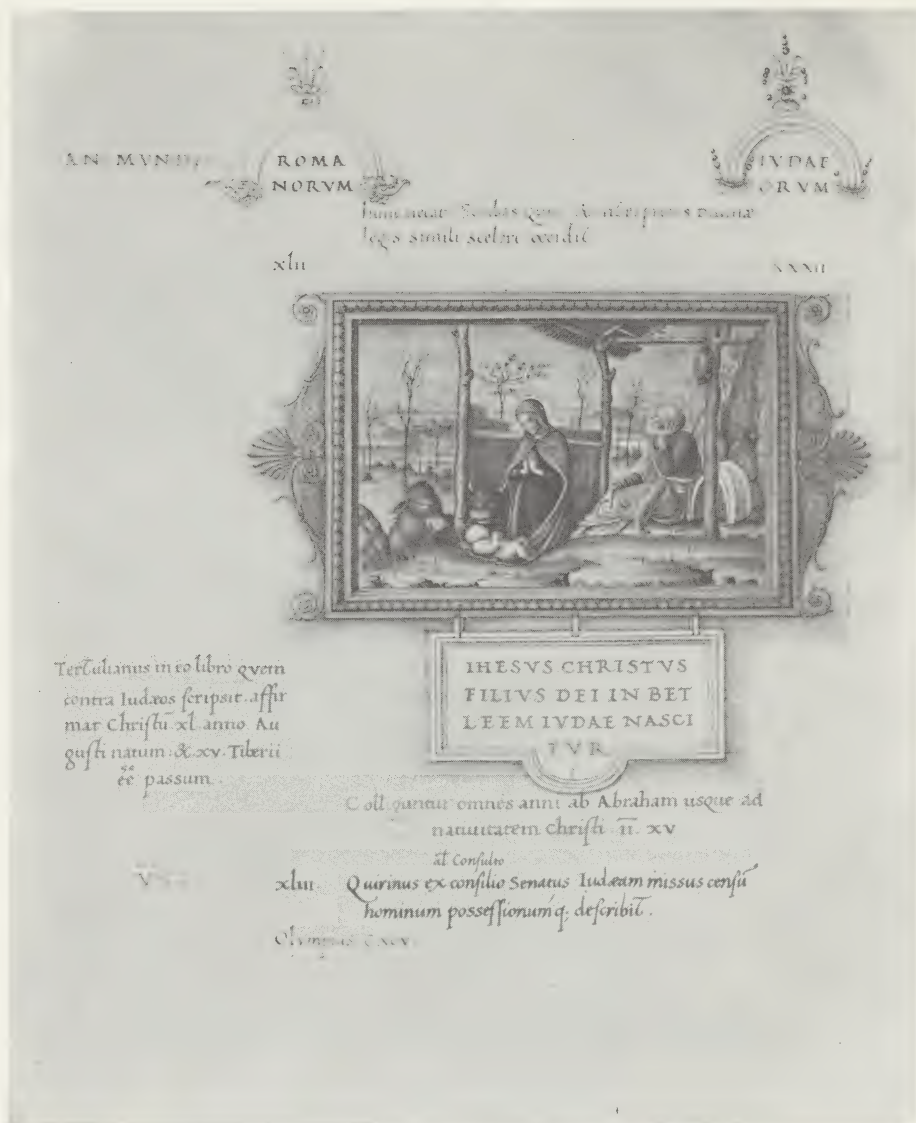
The last stroke nearly divides the letter into two parts, but the top part must be the smaller.

This is wrong: *e*

This is right: *e*

*ie te me be re he ell bell tell eel heel*

*meet teem let bet met net better*



From a fifteenth-century manuscript book written in Italy  
by Bartolomeo San Vito

This is a very charming page, full of interesting discoveries. We enjoy not  
only the script in its varied forms, but the picture too with its lovely background  
and appearance of light.

## STAGE SIX

We have studied ten letters, three vowels and seven consonants. This new family or group will include another vowel and four consonants.

What do you think of this shape?

ooo

I hardly know what name to give it. Could we call it a circle? No! An ellipse? No! An oblong? No! An oval? No! An egg shape? No, not quite!

No: it is none of these, for they are all symmetrical. You could fold a circle, an ellipse, an oblong, each of them in halves and each half would match the other. Symmetrical is a useful word. Can you remember it? This new shape is not symmetrical, but how fascinating it is. It does resemble an egg a little because it is narrower at the bottom, besides being longer than it is wide, but that narrow part at the bottom is not in the middle. It is towards the left. The top is interesting, too. There is a pushing stroke from the right to the left. This pushing stroke gives a slightly flattened look to the top; it ends in a curve to the downward stroke. The downward stroke, very slightly curved, slopes slightly like the running stroke:

~~~~~


Do you recognize our skating friend when you look at that down-stroke?



It slopes just enough for good balance. Practise these strokes giving a good push-off at the beginning. It is so easy to make the first pushing stroke too short.

Now we have the sharp turn into the hair-line that we used in the second stage. This hair-line continues to ascend until it meets the starting point of the letter:



Have you managed to get this mysterious shape and do you think it is a good one? You may be surprised to know that you have used it before. Turn back to Stage 4, and look closely at the second part of the letter 'b'. Turn this shape upside down and look again. Now make the perfect shape and then test it:

1. Is it wider at the top? [1 mark]
2. Does the down-stroke slope? [1 mark]
3. Is there a narrow curve at the bottom on the left side? [1 mark]
4. Is there a steep hair-line going up to the commencing stroke? [1 mark]
5. Do your thicker portions occur in the same places as those in this book? [1 mark]

Have you earned five marks? Only if you have done so should we complete the shape. The last part of the letter is

STAGE SIX

simple. It is Stage 2 again, the letter 'i' form:

a

Can you fit the letter 'a' into a series of running down-strokes?

a || a || a || a ||

Do not make them too square. To look graceful and elegant, an 'a' should be taller than it is wide; perhaps twice as tall.

Not this: *a* which is too squat;

but this: *a* which has a slender grace.

Do not make the letter too angular. Squares and oblongs are angular; but circles, ellipses, curves are not:

aaa aaa aaa aaa aaa

Shall we try a letter 'd'? When you have finished the first part, and you are satisfied with it:

o

then start from the top and add the letter 'l':

ooll dddd

We call the part of the 'd' that is above the 'a' the ascender. The 'd' is as tall as the 'h', the 'l' and the 'b':

adadad adadad adadad

a

adadad

Here is a fascinating letter, one that I know you will enjoy. Instead of having an ascender like the 'd', it has a descender, a gay, swinging, happy-go-lucky descender:

g g g

You see what happens after the *o* shape. The sloping running down-stroke goes well below the line and then swings boldly to the left, beyond the rest of the letter. The stroke continues upward, in the direction of the first line we used, the delicate hair-line. There it is, almost running into the other hair-line of the letter

g

I believe this will be one of your best letters. So many letters look simple, but turn out to be difficult; here is one that looks very difficult, but is actually as easy as a smile. Do not add a curl, to that tail:

Wrong – *g* – the curl is fussy and anxious.

Right – *g* – the swing is light-hearted and swift.

Wrong – *g* – the wavering end is timid and uncertain

Right – *g* – the upward swing is bold and sure and gives balance.

/g/g/g/g/

STAGE SIX

If you imagine slanting lines supporting the 'g', you can see that the descender needs to stand out farther to the left than the upper part of the letter:

gg ng rg lg dg eg ag gg
ing ang erg elg arg ing
thing ring ding-a-ling
gg go ga ge gi go ga gg

This next letter has a descender, too:

o q q

It looks easier than the 'g', but let us analyse it, divide it into its parts:

o q q q q

It is the third part that we should examine, because that little back movement will hardly show when the letter is completed. That final stroke, too, is just a very short, horizontal line. Practise this letter very carefully, and afterwards read all the notes again to see if every point has been remembered.

The last of this series is the *C*.

It is just like an unfinished *O*, except for the hair-line, which is omitted. Instead, there is a slightly, very slightly, wider curve at the bottom.

BEACON WRITING BOOK THREE

Not this: *℄*

but this: *℄*

cqeq cqeq cqeq

gg gg gg gg

STAGE SEVEN

Twins are sometimes exactly alike, so that we cannot see any differences between them, and then they are called identical twins, sometimes they are alike in some respects, but not in others, and then we say they are unidentical. These two letters may belong to the same family, because there are certain likenesses or similarities, but they are also quite unlike each other in a number of ways. Let us look at them:

s *f*
f *s*

Have you noticed how they are alike, how they can be compared? I expect you have guessed the meaning of the word 'compare', but use your dictionary, and see if your guess was a right one. Find the word 'contrast', too, because we shall need to use it as well.

Look again at the two letters. Compare them and contrast them in as many ways as you can. Have you discovered all these points of comparison? They are alike because:

1. The top and bottom curves are similar.
2. The bottom curve is slightly larger than the top in both letters.
3. The curve is rather flattened at the top.

What points of contrast have you noticed? They are unlike because:

1. The 'f' has an ascender and a descender, but the 's' is only as tall as the 'a'.
2. The slope between the top and bottom curve is quite different. A strong diagonal line such as we practised in our first exercises is here again in the middle of the 's'

S \ \ \ \ SSSS

but the 'f' slopes the other way, like the quick running stroke of the 'i':

||||f

3. The 'f' is crossed like the 't', and the cross is in the same position as the cross of the 't'.

Now, having used our eyes and observed all we can, observed their similarities and their differences, let us practise some of each in turn. We will begin with a few of the first strokes, strokes 1 and 2:

1. 
2. 

That second stroke is the one we want for 's':

\\ \\ \\ \\ SS \\ \\ \\ \\ SS \\ \\ \\ \\

S S S S S S

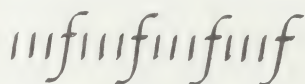
STAGE SEVEN

Does it remind you of a meat-hook in a butcher's shop? It is something like the two horse-shoes we see over a blacksmith's door.

The hair-line and strong, diagonal down-stroke were the first we learned. The third was the running down-stroke



which we use so often. This is the one we use for the 'f':



Study the curves at the top and bottom very carefully, and when you have finished a few examples, compare and contrast them with yours.

Would you like to put these unidentical twins together?



The words below use some of the letters we have practised:

sing sands sell roses sang
fall fill fine fans fling

The 'f' makes me think of flying; angels flying, snow flying, a flock of birds, a flight of planes, a flurry of wings.

Write:

*flying, flying, fairies flying,
sighing, sighing, summer dying.*

What a lot of words beginning with 'f' bring a picture of movement in the air or on the surface of water:

*flitter flutter flinging flotsam
floating flight falling flapping
unfurling flowing fanning*

Do you know the poem on 'London Snow' on the opposite page. I find it charming because of the quiet, falling sounds of the letters, 'f', 'l' and 's':

I wonder how Robert Bridges would have written it. He loved beautiful calligraphy and once said that it was ill-mannered to write badly or illegibly.

When men were all asleep, the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling, its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;

Lines from a poem on 'London Snow' by Robert Bridges

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth
towards the journeying Moon, and the stars
that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and
everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is
their appointed rest, and their native country
and their own natural homes, which they enter
unannounced, as lords that are certainly ex-
pected & yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

A gloss of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor
Coleridge, copied by Alfred Fairbank

This last manuscript is the work of a calligrapher of today. If it seems
familiar to you it is because he has written the letter examples in this book.

STAGE EIGHT

Stage 8 is concerned with gathering together the straying members of the various families. I should say the first is related to both the 'i' family and the 'n' family:

u

It is two 'i's', joined by extending the hair-line:

u u u u

Perhaps we should revise the letter 'i' first. Will you turn back to Stage 2 and read the warnings and questions. Try a few to see if you have improved.

Now for the 'u':

u u u

Do you prefer this?

u u u u

It has a serif at the beginning, which is really our old friend again, the steep, delicate hair-line:

''' u''' u''' u

How does this differ from the beginning of the letter 'n'? Do you agree that the 'n' begins with a hair-line, which is topped by a curve, whilst the 'u' begins with a hair-line that is topped by a point or sharp angle? Here they are together.

Can you make as good a row?

nnn uuu nnn uuu nnn

The pointed serif at the beginning of the 'u' can also be used at the beginning of an 'i', or 't', or 'l':

itl

Do not use serifs unless you can do them very well. They can look very attractive, but become positively ugly if the angle is wrong. Look at these awkward examples:

iii

Because the serif is so ungainly, the whole letter becomes unbalanced. The hair-line can only go in one direction, and the hair-line at the beginning must travel just as steeply as the hair-line at the end:

''ll'' ''ll'' ''ll''

iii

iutl ltui

Are you happy about the letter 'u'? Then let us try

j

There is the same pointed serif, the same running down stroke going below the line, but it ends with a push to the left, which is hardly a curve at all; it is, in fact, almost a

STAGE EIGHT

straight line. What a contrast to the carefree swing of the 'g'!

j

It is cautious and careful, quite a good letter for the beginning of a word like 'judge'. Practise it carefully and compare yours with the example.

I hope by now, that you have partly succeeded in training your eyes to see what is before them, that you are developing critical eyes, eyes that can look closely and see things as they are.

So look closely, and criticize your serif if it does not obey all the rules of hair-lines; criticize your down-stroke if it does not follow all the rules of the running down-stroke; criticize that ending if it is too long, too short, too round, too weak, too bold:

j j j j

This next letter is a cousin of several families. Can you name some?

p

p p p p

It is a little taller than the 'j' but shorter than the 't'. The second part is as high as the 'j', and it should remind you of the second part of the 'b' and, of course, of the 'h'. There is that difficult elliptical shape slightly flattened at the bottom. Would you like to remind yourself of this by turning to 'Stage 4, continued'?

The letter 'p' is the letter that I found most tantalizing. Sometimes I thought my pen was bewitched, and could not believe that I had produced the letter that appeared. It either sagged feebly like this:

p

or the down-stroke slipped away like this:

p

One girl remarked that it looked like an angry duchess sweeping along. But here is the correct letter:

p

regal, dignified, princely.

Let us practise it, taking care to keep it under control:

pppppp

pupupupu p jujujujuju

pepper paper pippin pupa pamper peaceful

perfect placid pallid pensive pendant plum

Can you write these words alphabetically? Write them as they are and then in alphabetical order. Be sure you know the meanings of all of them. Some, you will discover, have two meanings.

STAGE NINE

This is the last stage of the normal alphabet.

Over and over again, we have had to refer to the first and second stages, the very beginning. You will remember that I said it was the most important stage of all, and now, I expect you realize why I was anxious that your start should be a good one.

One mistake in the first exercises could be corrected fairly easily; but if it were not corrected, if it were allowed to pass, to become a habit; if the mistake continued from one stage to another, then we could have little hope of producing that 'thing of beauty', of becoming first-class calligraphers, for we know only too well, that one letter grows from another.

Our letters are all related one to another, and resemble each other, as sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, resemble the grandparents. So if you discover you have one bad stroke or letter, a faulty pen position, or book position, put it right at the beginning.

Here is our last family of letters, and, in order to understand our instructions quite clearly, we must return and consider once again Stages 1 and 2.

To remind us I shall give overleaf the three strokes we practised then:

- | | | |
|---------|-----|--|
| 1. UP | /// | the delicate hair-line |
| 2. DOWN | \\ | the strong diagonal line |
| 3. DOWN | | the running line we use for most letters |

The lines 1 and 3 are used together most frequently, particularly in letters like:

itlnmhbradgqjpu

The line 2, the strong diagonal line is used in the letter 's', and in most of the letters we shall be studying today.

The hair-line is used as it was in the 'n' and 'm'. You remember that we used strokes 1 and 3 in this exercise:

/// 1 /// 1 /// 1 /// 1

Now we are going to use strokes 1 and 2:

~~~~~

Look at the similarities and the differences between the two rows before you practise. The first stroke of both exercises is the same exactly; but in the second exercise we have a diagonal line instead of the normal running line.

Here are the letters that belong to our last family:

v w y x

and a distant cousin

k

The 'v', 'w' and 'x' must be perfectly symmetrical. These are not symmetrical: **v w x**

## STAGE NINE

but these are symmetrical:

VWX

Try to make some good shapes, singly at first, and then in joined groups to make a border design. Remember they have symmetry because they are well balanced, the angles and directions are good because a trained eye has been used.

Do not go on to the next stage if you have not succeeded in perfecting your shapes. Here are the testing rules.

1. Your pen must be held correctly. You know it is held correctly if your down strokes are thicker than the delicate up-stroke, the hair-line.
2. The angles should not be too wide nor too narrow; judge carefully.
3. The shapes should have a well-balanced symmetry, like a dancer on her 'points'.
4. The top level should be the same for all these letters, and that includes the middle angle of the 'w'.

Go on practising if you are not satisfied with your performance, and do not be too easily satisfied.

Now let us start the ‘v’ as we did at the beginning of this chapter:

/// ۱ /// ۱ /// ۱ /// ۱

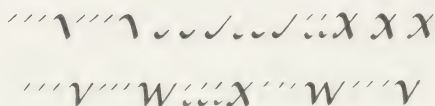
'''v'''v'''v'''v'''v

and the 'w', not too wide;

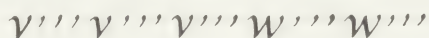
/// w /// w /// w /// w



and the 'x':



They are all still unfinished, but quite attractive. The last stage should only be done by those who like it and can do it. The small inward curve occurs only at the very end, and it does not make the last stroke higher than the rest. It is like a comma that has gone up instead of down:



Practise them and afterwards look at these, and say what is wrong with them:



Do you agree with these answers?

No. 1. Last stroke too high.

No. 2. Too wide.

No. 3. Not symmetrical.

No. 4. Middle point not as high as others.

No. 5. Too narrow.

No. 6. Up-stroke and down-stroke cross at wrong point.

Let us look again at the good examples of the 'v' and 'w'.

That curve at the end of the 'v' and 'w' is rather like the bow we make to our partners at the end of a dance; but not a deep bow, a slight bow, or a graceful nod.

There is no nod to the lovely letter *y*

Tirto doglioso errante mi rimembra  
 Per spelunche deserte e peregrine  
 Pianfi moltanni il mio sfrenato ardire  
 Et ancor poi trouai di quel mal fine  
 Et ritornai ne le terrene membra  
 Credo per piu dolore iui sentire  
 Io segui tanto auanti il mio desire  
 Ch'indi cacciando si com'io solea  
 Mi mossi: & quella fera bella e cruda  
 In una fonte ignuda  
 Si staua: quandol' sol piu forte ardea  
 Io perche d'altra uista non mi appago  
 Stetti a mirarla: ondella hebbe uergogna  
 Et per farne uendet ta o per celarse  
 L'acqua nel uiso colle man mi sparse  
 Vero dire: forse parra menzogna  
 Chio senti trarmi de la propria imago  
 Et in un ceruo solitario e uago  
 Di selua in selua natto mi trasformo  
 Et ancor de mie can fuggo lo stormo  
 anzen io non fu mai quel nuuol d'oro  
 Che poi discese in pretiosa pioggia  
 Si chel foco di ioue in parte spense  
 Ma fui ben fiamma chun bel guardo accense  
 Et fui luccel che piu p' laere poggia  
 Alzando lei che ne mie detti honoro  
 Ne per noua figura el primo alloro  
 Seppi lasciar che pur la suo dolce ombra  
 Ogni men bel piacer del cor mi sgombra

A page of a book of Petrarch's poems, written in Italy, A.D. 1470

The scribe has produced a book of the poems of Petrarch who lived from 1304-74, six hundred years ago. Here we see a hand that is something like our own and we realize how much the western countries of Europe owe to Italy. Petrarch was one of the pioneers of a simpler more legible form of handwriting, and a pioneer and patron of many other excellent things. His life marked the beginning of the glorious period called the Renaissance.

As you can see, it is closely related to the 'v' and there is a suggestion of a trailing skirt, or is it like the spur of the dainty columbine? Do you think it is flower-like?

v v y y y y

It sometimes reminds me of the reflection of an oar trailing in the water.

That final stroke begins as stroke 3, the running down-stroke of the 'i' and the 'n', but then it sways slightly, as though caught by a breeze or a ripple, and lightly it floats away.

We have still some more we can do to complete the 'x' in our final group. Here is the

x

I shall leave you to study it for yourself.

Can you do these letters in the same way? Look at the strong diagonal stroke of the 'k':

k

h b h b h b b k b k b k b k

k x k x k x k x k x k x k

And now we come to the end of this first book. I have omitted one letter, but he shall take his right place at the end. Before he does so, let us revise our family groups and then the complete alphabet:



STAGE NINE

*itl or itl*

*o*

*nmhbr*

*e*

*adgqc*

*sf*

*ujp*

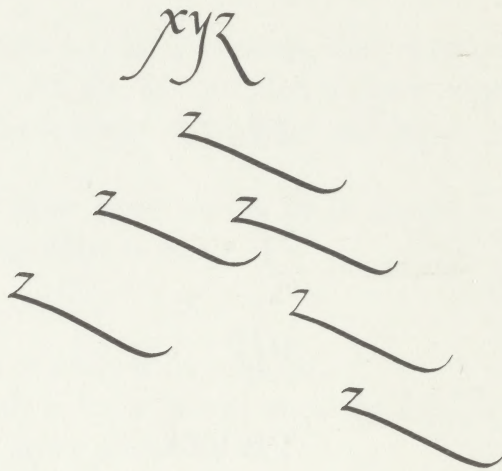
*vwyxk*

*z*

*abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz*

BEACON WRITING BOOK THREE

Our final letter, the lone wanderer, is given plenty of freedom at the end. Look below and there he is. Does he remind you of a stately peacock trailing its plumage? Is that a group of mandarin ducks, or could it be the gleaming wake of a passing ship?





## BEACON WRITING BOOKS

Editor and calligrapher: Alfred Fairbank, C.B.E.

Books One and Two by Charlotte Stone, Slade Diploma in Fine Art, A.T.D., Senior Lecturer in Art, Whitelands College, (formerly Art Lecturer at the Froebel Educational Institute), and Alfred Fairbank Teachers' Book for Books One and Two by Charlotte Stone

First and Second Supplements to Books One and Two by Alfred Fairbank and Charlotte Stone

Books Three and Four by Winifred Hooper, Head Teacher, Brentside Primary School for Girls, Ealing. Calligraphy by Alfred Fairbank

Books Five and Six by Alfred Fairbank

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Books One and Two are for infants using pencil, crayon or chalk and for the guidance of teachers. They provide pre-writing exercises, copies for learning to write the alphabets, numerals, names, phrases and verses.

The Teachers' Book deals with the principles of handwriting for the teaching of infants and it explains the use of Books One and Two.

The First Supplement is a copy book of verses written in the style of Books One and Two.

The Second Supplement is intended for pupils still using pencil, but takes the script a further step by teaching serifs and joins.

Books Three and Four are intended for juniors beginning to write with pen and ink but are valuable for older children and teachers.

Books Five and Six are copy books for writing with pen and ink.



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